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CONTENTS

<i>The Measure of a Singer:</i> PROFESSOR CARL E. SEASHORE	201
<i>The American School Hygiene Association</i> ..	212
<i>The Rockefeller Foundation</i>	213
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	213
<i>University and Educational News</i>	215
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i>	
<i>The Formation of Clouds over Fires:</i> WALTER N. LACY. <i>Endocrypta huntsmani:</i> C. MCLEAN FRASER	215
<i>Scientific Books:—</i>	
<i>Howard on the House Fly:</i> PROFESSOR JOHN B. SMITH. <i>Jongmans's Die Paleobotanische Literatur:</i> DR. EDWARD W. BERRY	216
<i>Scientific Journals and Articles</i>	217
<i>Notes on Entomology:</i> DR. NATHAN BANKS .	217
<i>Special Articles:—</i>	
<i>A New Genus of Rhinoceros from the Lower Miocene:</i> HAROLD JAMES COOK	219
<i>The American Association for the Advancement of Science:—</i>	
<i>Section A—Mathematics and Astronomy:</i> PROFESSOR G. A. MILLER	220
<i>The Association of American Geographers:</i> PROFESSOR ALBERT PERRY BRIGHAM	222
<i>The Society of American Bacteriologists:</i> DR. CHARLES E. MARSHALL	222

THE MEASURE OF A SINGER¹

THE historian of the future will probably characterize the period upon which we are now entering in psychology as the period of the rise of the applied psychological sciences. It may, therefore, be meet and proper to take some fundamental concept of applied psychology as topic for this annual address. I select for this purpose the rôle of mental measurement—the possibility, the scope and the meaning of mental measurements as the foundation of applied mental sciences.

In order to illustrate the scope and significance of mental measurement in a concrete and specific instance, I shall make bold to present a psychological outline of the measurement of an individual as a singer. Let us make the assumption that this individual is a girl, fifteen years of age, who has had musical training and now desires the best obtainable advice from a consulting psychologist in music in regard to her future prospects as a singer.

Musical power is generally admitted to embrace certain well-recognized and fairly concrete capacities. In our commonplace judgment about ourselves and others we say: "I have no ear for music." "I can not tell a chord from a discord." "I can not keep time." "I have no sense of rhythm." "I can not tell a two-step from a waltz." "I can not remember music." "I can not image sounds." "I am not moved by music." "I do not enjoy music." Or, if speaking of some one who has musical ability, we say: "He has a

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¹ The annual address before the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., December, 1911.